

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EA-06

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R 250146Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2541

INFO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

CINCPAC

S E C R E T KUALA LUMPUR 1014

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - CORRECTION OF LAST SENT-
ENCE PARA 1.

LIMDIS

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, SN, MY

SUBJ: NEED FOR U.S. POLICY REVIEW OF SINGAPORE PURCHASES OF
MILITARY EQUIPMENT

REF: SINGAPORE 787

1. WE WELCOME OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON EMBASSY SINGA-
PORE'S THOUGHTFUL TELEGRAM (REFTEL) RAISING THE POLICY
IMPLICATIONS OF OUR BECOMING A MAJOR SUPPLIER OF MILI-
TARY EQUIPMENT TO SINGAPORE IN SUPPORT OF A FORWARD DEFENSE
STRATEGY THAT CONTEMPLATES AN INVASION OF JOHORE UNDER
A WORST CASE SCENARIO. CENTRAL POINT IS NOT, AS SINGA-
PORE CORRECTLY RECOGNIZES, WHETHER GOM OR GOS WILL BE
DISPLEASED WITH US. ALTHOUGH THE PROBABLE REACTION OF
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EITHER GOVERNMENT TO OUR DECISION IS SOMETHING WE WILL

WISH TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT, WE CAN SURVIVE (AND HAVE SURVIVED BEFORE) EITHER MALAYSIAN OR SINGAPOREAN UNHAPPINESS. WE QUESTION ALSO WHETHER WE SHOULD GIVE MUCH WEIGHT TO FACTOR OF NAVAL ACCESS TO SINGAPORE FACILITIES. OUR PRESENCE IS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN SINGAPORE SECURITY CALCULATIONS AND TO DENY THIS ACCESS WOULD BE SELF-DEFEATING. IT MIGHT EVEN BE ARGUED THAT A MILITARILY SELF-SUFFICIENT SINGAPORE WOULD BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO TERMINATE NAVAL ACCESS. LOCALLY, WE DO NOT BELIEVE GOM REACTION TO THE PROPOSED SALES WOULD HAVE ANY SERIOUS EFFECT ON OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE SHORT RUN.

2. THERE IS AN ARGUMENT FOR LIMITING MILITARY SALES TO SINGAPORE ON BROADER GROUNDS. DO WE WANT TO PROVIDE A SMALL, FORTRESS STATE AT THE SOUTHERN TIP OF THE MALAY PENINSULA WITH THE MILITARY CAPACITY TO INTERVENE IN THE AFFAIRS OF HER NEIGHBORS? MORE THAN ANY REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS PRESENTLY IN EXISTENCE, THE THREAT OF VIOLENCE THAT WOULD BE MOST SERIOUSLY DESTABILIZING IN INSULAR AND PENINSULAR SEA COMES FROM THE CHINESE-MALAY RELATIONSHIP--NOT ONLY HERE IN THE PENINSULA, BUT ALSO IN INDONESIA. A SINGAPORE WITH THE CAPACITY TO INVADE JOHORE WILL LOOK FAR MORE DANGEROUS TO THE GOM (AND PROBABLY THE GOI) THAN A MEDIUM-SIZED INSURGENCY IN THE JUNGLE COVERED HILLS OF THE MALAYSIAN-THAI BORDER. AT SOME POINT IN THE MILITARY BUILD-UP SINGAPORE IS GOING TO BE PERCEIVED AS A THREAT TO MALAYSIA, AND IF MALAYSIA THEN DECIDES TO ARM HERSELF TO DEFEND AGAINST SINGAPORE PRECIOUS RESOURCES WILL HAVE BEEN DRAINED AWAY NOT ONLY FROM COMBATTING THE COMMUNIST INSURGENCY, BUT ALSO FROM ALLEVIATING THE POVERTY OF ALL RACES IN MALAYSIA--A STRATEGY ABSOLUTELY CENTRAL TO ANY CONCEPT OF FUTURE COMMUNAL HARMONY. WE WOULD THEN HAVE THE PARADOX OF LEE HELPING TO CREATE THE "WORST CASE" HE IS HOPING TO AVOID.

3. WE ARE RELUCTANT TO PRONOUNCE FOR INDONESIA FROM HERE, BUT WE WOULD ANTICIPATE UNDESIRABLE CONSEQUENCES SHOULD THE INDONESIANS COME TO SHARE MALAYSIAN ALARM

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AT AN AMERICAN-ARMED SINGAPORE WITH THE CAPACITY TO GRAB SOUTHERN JOHORE. BECAUSE OF THE CLOSE GOM-GOI LINK AND THE INDONESIAN ELEMENT IN GOM SECURITY THINKING, WE RECOMMEND THAT EMBASSY JAKARTA BE ASKED TO COMMENT ON THIS COMPLEX QUESTION.

4. OUR RECOMMENDATION AT THIS JUNCTURE IS THAT THE USG LIMIT ARMU SALES TO SINGAPORE TO A MODEST LEVEL--

SOMETHING CLEARLY SHORT OF AN AMOUNT ALLOWING HER SERIOUSLY
TO CONTEMPLATE A FORWARD STRATEGY IN THE PENINSULA.
UNDERHILL

SECRET

NNN

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